

LGBT HISTORY IN THE UNITED STATES: A TIMELINE

1492: Columbus "discovers" America.

1566: First known execution in North America of a person for same-sex sexual activities (by the Spanish in Florida.)

1607: First permanent English colony established at Jamestown, Virginia.

1610: Virginia adopts "sodomy laws" of England, making sex between two men a "capital crime" punishable by death. Although no longer a capital crime, sodomy remains an imprisonable offense in the laws of twenty-four states.

1642: Elizabeth Johnson becomes first woman to be punished for violating sodomy laws (Essex County of the Massachusetts Bay Colony.)

1744: French missionary Father Charlevoix describes the transgender and homosexual behavior of the Iroquois berdache: "There are men unashamed to wear women's clothing and to practice all the occupations of women, from which follows corruption that I cannot express. They pretend that this usage comes from their religion." In fact, the Iroquois are among 133 North American tribes that honor their two-spirit men and women with a sacred ceremonial role.

1776: Thirteen colonies declare independence from Britain.

1777: In a move seen as "liberal" at the time, Thomas Jefferson proposes a revision of Virginia law to reduce the penalty for sodomy from death to castration. This is never enacted.

1778: Gotthold Enslin becomes first American discharged from the Army for sodomy.

1787: Constitution approved; United States government takes current form.

1790: The "Industrial Revolution" follows, with rapidly-growing cities gradually replacing the farm as the living and working environment of most Americans.

1860: Walt Whitman publishes first "Calamus" poems in *Leaves of Grass*, celebrating his "love of comrades," a veiled reference to his homosexuality. Whitman is typical of the new gay subculture emerging in American cities. Away from the prying eyes of family and small-town neighbors, gay people in cities were freer to act on their sexual orientations than before and found it easier to meet others like themselves. Noted psychiatrist Havlock Ellis was to comment, after a 1915 visit to the United States that, "The world of sexual inverts, indeed, is a large one in any American city."

1865: Civil War ends. Slavery abolished and voting and citizenship rights granted to blacks by Thirteenth, Fourteenth and Fifteenth Amendments.

1869: Hungarian psychologist Benkert invents the word "homosexual" to describe people attracted to the same sex. This signals an important attitude shift brought on by the new medical profession: rather than being a criminal act or a sin (as the act of sodomy was considered to be), loving someone of the same sex was now seen as a psychological "condition" or illness which should be cured, not punished. There is some debate about this date, however. The noted historian Jonathan Katz notes that Benkert used the word "homosexual" in a letter to Ulrichs in 1868.

1889: Lesbian Jane Addams founds Hull House in Chicago, America's first "settlement house" offering services for the poor. Addams is vital in founding the new profession of "social work." As educational and economic opportunities began to expand for women in the late nineteenth century, more and more enter this new profession. Other professions, like teaching and nursing, also became available, allowing women to earn their own incomes and live independently, without husbands. Some then were able to act on their same-sex desires, and the term "Boston marriage" comes to refer to two women who live together for a long period of time, derived from the large numbers of professional women who did so in Boston. This independence was the prerequisite for the emergence of lesbian communities.

1920: Women win the right to vote with the passage of the Nineteenth Amendment.

1924: The Society for Human Rights, America's first known gay rights organization, is founded in Chicago. Police and media harassment forces its disbandment in less than a year. Nevertheless, the "Roaring Twenties" sees a new openness toward homosexuality with gay artists such as Langston Hughes and Bessie Smith achieving prominence through the "Harlem Renaissance." The new "nightlife" of the era included many "bohemian" clubs where gay people were welcomed.

1929: Stock Market Crash brings on Great Depression of the Thirties, where restricted economic opportunities mean a loss of individual freedom for many, a setback for gays.

1941: United States enters World War II.

1942: U.S. military, under influence of psychiatric establishment, revises codes on homosexual behavior as part of general revision brought on by World War II. Previously, soldiers could only be expelled if witnessed committing "sodomy"; now, being "homosexual" is enough for dismissal. The Army begins asking entering soldiers about their sexual orientations and expel any recruits or present soldiers who "admit" to their homosexuality, whether or not they have ever acted on these desires. These expulsions are known as "blue discharges" because of the color of the paper on which they are printed. Approximately 100,000 Americans are discharged on this basis over the next 50 years.

1945: World War II ends. The Veterans Benevolent Association is founded in New York by gay service people to fight the "blue discharge" system.

1949: Soviets explode the first atomic bomb, and Communists take over China, prompting hysteria in America over "Communist threat." Sen. McCarthy begins charging that subversives "have undermined our government and begins "witch hunts" to get rid of them; this period becomes known as the "McCarthy Era."

1950: Undersecretary of State John Puerifoy speaks of a "pervert peril" in testimony before Congress, leading to "witch hunts" for gays who work in the federal government. Mass expulsions of gay employees begin.

1950: Harry Hay and others found Mattachine Society in Los Angeles, America's first on-going gay rights organization.

1953: Newly-elected President Dwight Eisenhower bans employment of gays by the government in Executive Order 10450. Employees of federal, state and local governments must take "loyalty oaths" to gain employment, swearing (among other things) that they are not homosexual. These regulations are not repealed until 1975.

1955: Phyllis Martin and Del Lyon found America's first lesbian rights organization, The Daughters of Bilitis, in San Francisco.

1955: Gay African-American activist Bayard Rustin visits Montgomery, Alabama in midst of famous "bus boycott" led by the Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr. He instructs King and other activists in the techniques of civil disobedience, which becomes chief tactic of the black Civil Rights Movement. He later organizes the 1963 March on Washington where King delivers the famous "I Have a Dream" speech."

1958: One magazine, a publication affiliated with Mattachine, wins a case against the U.S. Postal Service, which had banned distribution of any publications on homosexuality through the mails as "obscenity," before the Supreme Court.

1964: Congress passes Civil Rights Act, preventing states from infringing on the rights granted to blacks by post-Civil War Constitutional Amendments. Passage is considered the result of massive civil disobedience and protest campaigns led by King and organized by Rustin.

1965: Gay and lesbian people picket outside federal offices in Washington to protest the government's employment discrimination against gays. First public protest by gay people in the nation's capital.

1969: Angered by police harassment, patrons (mainly transgender) of the Stonewall Inn, a New York gay bar, fight back during a raid, initiating several days of violence known as the "Stonewall Riots." Gay leadership adopts a new militant attitude, borrowing from other movements of the time, to use such slogans as "Gay is Good" and to found a "Gay Liberation Front." Many cities begin "Gay Pride Marches" in late June to commemorate this uprising "against oppression.

1973: The American Psychiatric Association votes to remove homosexuality from its list of "illnesses," ending a century of efforts to "cure" gays by psychologists.

1974: Elaine Noble becomes first openly lesbian or gay person elected to state office when she wins a seat in Massachusetts State House of Representatives.

1979: First "March on Washington for Gay Rights" draws 100,000 marchers.

1980: Embracing support from the "Moral Majority," Republican Ronald Reagan wins presidency having pledged to "resist the efforts to obtain government endorsement of homosexuality."

1981: A new disease appears disproportionately among gay men, earning it the media tag "gay cancer" and the medical name "Gay-Related Immune Deficiency." Later known as "Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome" (AIDS), this disease sweeps through the gay community and other marginalized groups in American society, primarily people of color. Over 100,000 gay men die in the next decade. The "Moral Majority" decrees that the disease is "God's punishment for homosexuality" and the Reagan Administration are extremely slow in its response to this health crisis. President Reagan does not even mention the word AIDS in public until well into his second term in office, several years into the epidemic. Public health officials cite the Administration's slow rate of response as the central reason for AIDS becoming an epidemic in America.

1982: Wisconsin becomes first state to ban employment discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation. Today, California, Connecticut, Hawaii, Massachusetts, Minnesota, New Jersey, Rhode Island and Vermont have such laws, but 41 states still allow discrimination.

1983: Representative Gerry Studds of Massachusetts becomes America's first openly gay member of Congress.

1983: The first Gay Games are held in San Francisco. The U.S. Olympics Committee has brought the issue of the name "Gay Olympics" to court, though they have allowed both commercial and non-profit groups to use the word Olympics in the past.

1986: In a 5-4 vote, the Supreme Court upholds the sodomy laws of the state of Georgia in the Bowers v. Hardwick decision. As a result, government continues to have the right to arrest consenting adults having sex in the privacy of their own homes in 24 states.

1986: In Fremont, California, Becky Smith and Annie Afelck become the first openly lesbian couple in the United States to be granted legal, joint adoption of a child.

1987: Activists form the "AIDS Coalition to Unleash Power" (ACT UP) in New York. Using direct action civil disobedience techniques, this group spreads nationwide and, through its protests, forces the government to take substantial action to fight AIDS for the first time.

1987: Five hundred thousand attend the second March on Washington for Lesbian and Gay Rights, which displays the NAMES Project AIDS Memorial Quilt for the first time.

1988: The National Education Association adopts a resolution calling for every school district to provide counseling for students struggling with their sexual orientation.

1988: Lesbians and gay men celebrate the first annual National Coming Out Day (October 11).

1989: Denmark becomes the first nation to legalize gay marriage. Norway becomes the second in 1993.

1990: President Bush signs into law the Hate Crime Statistics Act, the first federal law to include the term "sexual orientation."

1990: Queer Nation, its rhetoric, militancy, media savvy and membership drawing from ACT UP, is formed in New York.

1990-1991: The "culture war" against art with gay or lesbian content results in the prosecution of a museum displaying a Robert Mapplethorpe exhibit and the rescinding of National Endowment of the Arts grants to three openly lesbian or gay artists.

1992: Pat Buchanan and Pat Robertson are granted a platform for their virulently homophobic and avowedly theocratic views at the Republican National Convention.

1992: Bill Clinton is elected to the White House. His views on employment discrimination and gays in the military, while not demonstrably more progressive than other Democratic contenders, place him in stark contrast with George Bush and the Republican Party. Analysis will show that a decided gender gap in favor of Clinton and a first-ever tangible gay voting bloc are decisive in his winning the presidency.

1992: The Lesbian Avengers is founded in New York, and stages an International Dyke March the night before the March on Washington in 1993.

1992: Colorado passes Amendment 2, prohibiting local entities from enacting civil rights protection for lesbians and gays in the future. One year later, a state district court will overturn the measure. In 1996, the Supreme Court will uphold the district court's decision in Romer vs. Evans, declaring that "A State cannot so deem a class of persons a stranger to its laws."

1993: Massachusetts becomes the first state to ban discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation against public school students, heralding emergence of widespread gay youth activism.

1993: President Clinton's promised lifting of the ban of gays in the military meets with such Congressional and military establishment opposition that he signs the so-called "don't ask, don't tell, don't pursue" compromise. Activists object that the compromise leaves virtually all of the discriminatory practices intact and leads to a greater number of gay and lesbian-related discharges.

1993: The third March on Washington draws one million to Washington. Its official title is now bi-inclusive (1979 was only "gay"; 1987 was "lesbian and gay"): "March on Washington for Lesbian, Gay, and Bisexual Rights."

1994: The 25th anniversary of the Stonewall uprising is commemorated with a march on the United Nations in New York City and coincides with the fourth annual Gay Games in New York.

1995: President Clinton finally ends ban on security clearances for gay people, the last vestige of McCarthy-era restrictions imposed in the 50s when gays were deemed an automatic threat to national sexuality because of their sexuality.

1996: The Defense of Marriage Act (DOMA) passes with overwhelming bipartisan support and President Clinton's signature. The law allows states not to recognize same-sex marriages, even when performed legally in other states.

1996: The Employment Non-Discrimination Act (ENDA), which would have prohibited discrimination in the workplace based on sexual orientation, fails in the Senate by a vote of 50-49. In the event of a tie, Vice President Al Gore had been prepared to vote in favor, and President Clinton had pledged to sign the bill into law. It is the first time a vote on lesbian and gay civil rights has come before the full Senate.

1997: Ellen DeGeneres, and her television character Ellen Morgan, come out. Ellen is the first prime time television show to feature an openly gay or lesbian lead character. Right-wing groups call for a boycott of ABC and its "anti-family" parent company, Disney. The boycott fails.

1998: The sitcom Will & Grace airs on NBC, featuring a gay male lawyer and his best friend and housemate - a straight woman.

1999: Matthew Shepard, a young openly gay man, is savagely beaten and left to die near Laramie, Wyoming. The incident sparks a nationwide debate about hate crime legislation.

1999: California adopts a domestic partnership law granting same-sex partners all the legal rights and benefits of married couples.

2000: Vermont becomes the first state to legalize same-sex civil unions (Connecticut does in 2004).

2001: The Netherlands legalizes same-sex marriage.

2002: Belgium legalizes same-sex marriage.

2003: The Supreme Court strikes down a Texas law banning private, consensual sex between same-sex adults in the landmark case Lawrence v. Texas. The ruling overturned the 1986 case Bowers v. Hardwick, in which the Court upheld a similar law.

2004: Massachusetts becomes the first state to legalize same-sex marriage.

2005: Spain and Canada both legalize same-sex marriage.

2006: South Africa legalizes same-sex marriage. Israel agrees to recognize same-sex marriages performed in other countries.

Source: Unknown



Parents, Families & Friends
of Lesbians and Gay

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Ways in which Gender and Sexual Orientation Play a Role In Your School

GENDER

- lining up for separate restrooms
- celebrating Women's History Month
- more resources for boys athletics
- lessons on women writers
- only girls can wear skirts
- lessons on gender discrimination
- sitting boy-girl-boy-girl
- prohibiting sexist name-calling
- boys play here, girls play there
- separation during sex ed
- boys team vs. girls team
- calling on girls less
- asking boys to move heavy items
- saying good girls don't act "like that"
- encouraging boys to take science
- cross-dressing during Halloween
- boy-girl couples at dances
- boy-girl couples on prom courts
- calling boys a "sissy girl"
- more women teachers in elementary school
- more male figures in textbooks
- more literature by male authors
- saying "Mr." or "Ms."
- forms for "mother or father"

SEXUAL ORIENTATION

- bullying/harassment of GLBT people ,
- getting called a sissy or a girl (if you're a boy, effeminate) or a dyke (if you're a girl, masculine)
- no recognition of same-sex parents or guardians
- GLBT discrimination mentioned in school policy
- Gay-prom forbidden/allowed
- Gay Straight Alliance on campus
- GLBT faculty open/closeted
- pictures of opposite-sex spouses on desk
- Valentine's Day activities focus on opposite-sex
- discussing one's same-gender partner
- guest speaker on transgenderism



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